

August 5, 1974

TO: DO/OCI

SUBJECT: Comment on paper

25X1

1. When a report starts off by defining a simple page of paper as a "two-dimensional, rectilinear matrix," I must admit to some doubt as to the basic soundness of what follows. Despite the rhetoric, however, much of what is presented in the paper is pretty basic. The list of ten text "formats" on page 6, for example, is far from exhaustive, as will be obvious to any reader of newspapers, magazines, or text-books.

2. The exact point of the paper escapes me. If, as stated in paragraph one, it is directed toward new "hard-copy presentation means," (emphasis mine), it does not discuss any of these means--MTST and MTSC, phototypesetters, line-printers, OCR, etc. If on the other hand it is directed toward new appearances, it gives few really intriguing format samples, does not consider such vital variables as paper size, and seems overly taken with the discovery of bold-face type (presumably the next volume will discover italics and underlining).

3. Any number of excellent books are available on publications design and format, almost all of which agree on certain general principles (e.g., read-ability, capturing consumer interest, etc.) and disagree on the means to this end (i.e., one designer's favorite type face is another's prime example of horrible). Almost all will agree, however, that the first step is not to get into format examples (which are virtually endless) but to decide on the "character" of the publication (academic, "arty," institutional) and the restrictions (cost, time, etc.) within which the designer must work.

4. With this in mind, there seems little point in commenting on the samples in Appendix I. You will recall, however, that various options were prepared at the time the present NIB format was being decided. As fitted to dealing with a practical problem within certain defined limits, these samples included not only the appearance, but also the technical, personnel, time, and cost factors involved.

5. Mostly, the given examples show that anyone with an MTSC and a two-dimensional rectilinear matrix can come up with an almost infinite number of varieties, some better, some worse, none particularly imaginative, few that we haven't touched on at some time in the past. Moreover, technical studies on line length, type readability, etc., are readily available, and little new research would seem to be called for on our part (except perhaps a trip to the library). Neither technical studies nor sample formats, however, will ever substitute for a well-defined problem (on the part of management) and a well-cultivated taste (on the part of the designer).

6. While not competent to comment on the chart section, I could mention that the general rule we have followed is "the simpler the better." This is because:

- most of our readers are busy, non-specialists who will be put off by a chart they have to puzzle over;
- a one-message chart is generally more effective in illustrating the point being made;
- with our normally short deadlines, preparation and printing time is a large factor (a chart that takes a week to work up is no use for tomorrow's NID);
- also because of deadlines, it is easier to ensure the accuracy of plain, easy-to-read charts with limited data.

With the exception of line, bar, and pie charts, the other examples tend to be either too "busy," too complex, or too "cute" for widespread general use. A few are valuable in specialized instances, such as process charts for copy flow or histograms for vu-graphs, for example.

7. The use of chart-able information in political reporting (e.g., probability curves) is always intriguing, but it generally stumbles on the fact that figures are precise while words are not. It is hard for a cartographer to place a unit "in the vicinity of," for example, or for a graphic artist to pinpoint the exact location of a "more than likely." On the other hand, as suggested in OCI's Studies in Methodology*, the very need to make the attempt to quantify can sharpen an analyst's perceptions, but once again, this is a process that needs considerable development before we have to worry about format for the result. 25X1

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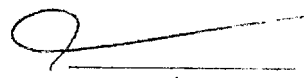
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Remarks:

This does move
toward Part II of
a style Manual, in
which I am still
interested, as you
know —


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